A WILD NIGHT IN MANILA.

The Story of the Filipino Incendiary Insurrection of February 22, 1899.

By CAPT. HARRY L. WELLS, 2d Ore. Vols.

The celebration of Washington's Birthday in Manila in 1899 was unique and at the same time exciting and brilliant. Thousands of huts and houses burned with a roar of bursting bamboo like the rattle of musketry from a large army in action, while the sky was lurid from the flames, and thousands of refugees streamed out of the blazing habitations loaded with goods or plunder and sought places of safety beyond the reach of the flames, while ever and anon was heard the genuine crack of a rifle as some Filipino skulker took a shot at the soldiers who were at work extinguishing the fire, or the street patrol brought down one of these sharpshooters with a well-aimed shot and tumbled him from a window or roof of a building.

It was a wild night, one which will never fade from the memory of those who were in the thick of the conflagration and the fray. How the Filipinos happened to pick out the 22d of February for this effort to destroy the town is not known, but in all probability the selection was but a coincidence and the apparently impromptu celebration of the birthday of the Father of His Country was by no means intended as such. However, the American soldiers so considered it, and in the midst of the work and the shooting joked about it in genuine American style.

AMERICANS AWARE OF PLOT.

The first attack made by Aguinaldo's army upon Manila was on the night of Feb. 4, resulting in the utter rout of the assailants, who were driven back several miles into the country. After Gen. Otis had by a few days' fighting established his lines at the points where he intended to hold them for the permanent defense of the city, he waited for reinforcements, and it was during that period of waiting that the plot to destroy the city and capture it in the confusion was laid and attempted to be executed. For nearly six weeks, both before and after the attack upon the town, the Americans had been given repeated warnings of an intended uprising in the city, to be accompanied by an attack from the outside. All the troops were in readiness for such an attempt, and every regiment, company and battery had its position assigned to it, to which it should promptly go upon the sounding of a general alarm.

These alarms became frequent, sometimes in the daytime and sometimes at night. My own regiment, the 2d Ore., was a portion of the provost guard entrusted with the policing of the city, and in consequence we were called out much more often than the regiments that had no such duty to perform.

One battalion went so often to Victoria street, within the walled city, and roosted on the cobblestones waiting for orders, that the street became known as the "Victoria trenches."

It was a common remark when the men sought their bamboo bunks at the sound of quarters, "Well, I wonder how many times the googoos will get us out tonight." One facetious soldier said that when he got home he was going to write another story, to go with the title "In the Midst of Alarms."

The Captain of one company, whose station was on one of the bridges, went to his post so often at night that he assured me he could detect and describe every brand of smell that floated down the Passig River.

The Secret Service, or Information Bureau, was in constant receipt of information about plots of various degrees of barbarity for the complete extermination of the white population. This Information Bureau used to be somewhat of a joke in the army. It had a number of natives in its employ, and it was the common opinion that these natives furnished information to both sides. Certain it was that nothing the army undertook was unknown to the insurgents. As for us, we knew a great deal about what the insurgents were not doing, though how much of what they were actually doing was reported to us by these agents was a question. At any rate, it was reported that such and such a night was the one selected for the grand uprising, then another and another, until it became a joke in the army. In almost all cases Sunday was the day selected.

It is a peculiarity of the Filipinos that they nearly always select Sunday for a battle. Possibly they think so sacred a day the best for their sacred cause. Of this I do not know, but I noticed before the fall of Manila that there was a fight every Sunday, and after Aguinaldo undertook the job of driving the Americans into the sea Sunday was his day of special activity. We were always specially watchful on Sunday.

During this period it was dangerous work for the street patrol, because of their liability to secret assault. The authorities had been guilty of the bad judgment of dismissing the native police force, composed largely of Macabebes of undoubted loyalty, because they were disliked by the Tagals. This police force, which it has since been found necessary to re-establish, had been very active in discovering and disarming insurgents within the city limits, and complaints had been made by Aguinaldo's following about them. As it was then the policy to placate and coddle the insurgents as much as possible, this very useful organization was disbanded, and the army provost guard, utterly ignorant of the natives and their characteristics, undertook all the police work of the city. The ill effects of the change were soon apparent, but the policy was persisted in for the reason given.

BOLOED AT HIS POST.

Several of the street patrol had lively experiences, but perhaps that of a sentinel of the Wyoming battalion was the most exciting. It is the custom of the Filipino to carry his bolo out of sight under his clothing, the possessor maintaining that simple and harmless appearance that was referred to by Bret Hart in his ballad of the Chinamen whose "smile it was childlike and bland." Two such "amigos" passed this Wyoming sentinel on his beat along a road in the southern suburbs of the city, touching their pompadour hair in the awkward salute the average Filipino gives to white men, and remarking "Buenos noches, senor; muchos amigos," to which the sentinel replied, "Bueno noche," and passed on. Instantly he was slashed from behind by one of them with a bolo, the knife laying open a horrible gash down the side of his face, neck and shoulder. He fell to the ground and the bolomen ran, but they did not get away. Partly rising the wounded man brought his Springfield to bear on the fleeing figures and dropped one of them. Hastily inserting another cartridge, he drew a bead on the other, now but an indistinct figure fast vanishing in the dim light of the stars, and fired. Then he collapsed.

The noise of the shooting brought the Corporal with a relief, and the wounded man was taken to the hospital, while the body of the dead Filipino was left for burial the next morning. When daylight came the body of the second man was found in the swamp grass by the side of the road, and the two were buried in the same grave. The brave sentinel fortunately recovered. This was the condition of affairs when the outbreak so long plotted finally occurred on the memorable night of Feb. 22.

FILIPINO CHARACTERISTICS THAT INVITE FAILURE.

This affair was as elaborately planned as the abortive uprising that was to have taken place on the night Aguinaldo attacked the city, nearly three weeks previously, and, like it, failed, because of the characteristic weakness of the Filipino and through the very inherent weakness of such a plot. It is a difficult thing to get men actually to rise all over a city against an organized force of police and troops, no matter how great their numbers or how carefully their plans have been laid. When the time of action comes, the organization which gives confidence and strength is not in ocular existence. It is only on paper. Each man as he grasps his weapon and rushes out into the street to begin the work of slaughter discovers that he is operating as an individual, and not as an integral of an organization, and therefore feels that he is fighting the whole police force alone. Even the best and bravest of men cannot be relied upon under such conditions, much less men who, like the Filipinos, were personally in fear of the men whom they were about to encounter.

Every Filipino who has been in contact with the Americans long enough to know anything of them feels that the American physically and morally is his superior, and is afraid to come into personal collision with him. Arm one good American soldier with a club only and

"IT WAS SOON DISCOVERED THAT THE FIRES WERE INCENDIARY."

give the same weapon to a dozen Filipinos, and the American will put them all to flight. This is why they never stand up against the rushes of our troops in battle and why the fighting has been reduced to mere bushwhack sniping in the districts where the Americans have been any length of time.

In Samar, where the recent surprise attacks upon small American detachments have occurred, the explanation of the fact that bolomen were bold enough to rush into the American camp, even when outnumbering their intended victims five to one, is the fact that these men had not before come into actual contact with the troops. They are tribesmen who have not had the fighting experience of the natives in Luzon and have been deceived by the same stories the insurgent leaders told the natives in Luzon as long as they could make them believe them, to the effect that the Americans could not fight and that one Filipino could whip two of them. The fact that they lost four men to the Americans' one in these attacks has opened their eyes, and it is safe to say that the guerrillas of Samar will soon appreciate the beauties of long-range sniping and keep a respectful distance from camp.

The Filipino is a very pugnacious and quick-tempered individual. He is quick to take offense and to draw his knife, but when he makes a slash with it his instinct is to run before the other fellow can slash back again. The good old Saxon style of standing up to the fight and give and take blows is something foreign to his nature. He simply cannot stand up to the line. This explains the reason why in every battle the fight has been over in a few minutes after the Americans got into position where they could reach the Filipinos personally. It also explains why no plot for an uprising, of which there have been scores, has been successful. The nerve to execute them is not commensurate with the conning to conceive them. Pomposity and pretense are prevailing characteristics. This leads them to make elaborate plans they themselves must know they will not dare to execute. There need never be feared a successful uprising in Manila, yet there may be looked for continual plotting and restlessness, for that is an unalterable Filipino trait.

UPRISING OF FEB. 22, 1899.

Along these lines was the great uprising of Feb. 22, 1899, planned by the Katipunan Society, which is the backbone of the insurrection, and all that there is now left of it. Companies had been organized in the city and armed with bolos, while a large number of men had Manser rifles as well concealed in their houses.

The general plan was for the city to be set on fire in several places, and in the confusion and excitement that was expected to ensue the Katipunans would start out upon their mission of death to every foreigner in the city—men, women and children. Advantage was to be taken of the situation, also, for Aguinaldo's troops to break through the expected weakened lines around the city, following up the attack to be made by a detachment of several hundred of his soldiers, who entered the city from Malabon, five miles to the north, by making their way through the unguarded marshes along the shore of the bay. These men numbered about 300, and were the regularly organized, uniformed and drilled men of the insurgent army. It was their part of the plot to create the first diversion of the fighting and form a rallying point for the Katipunan organizations in the city in their work of slaughter. They entered the Tondo district after dark, and remained concealed until the time was ripe for them to make their demonstration.

In pursuance of these plans fires were started early in the northwestern part of the city, and the troops patroling that section were called out to subdue them. It was soon discovered that the fires were incendiary, as they were started in several places and at repeated times. The Fire Department was called out. This does not mean much in Manila, or did not at that time. The city had some small, antiquated machines about the size of a good sewing machine, but these were out of business. There was, however, a steamer belonging to what was known as the English company. This was simply a company supported by the foreign merchants for their own protection. The engineer was an Englishman, but the firemen were all Filipinos. This machine was taken to the fire and did the best it could, which was not much. However, the Minnesotas, who were responsible for that section of the city, with the aid of the engine, succeeded in subduing the fire. They also killed several Filipinos who cut hose and fired upon the firemen.

This excitement had about quieted down when there was an outbreak in the northern portion of the city, in the Tondo district. Two companies of the Minnesotas were stationed there. About 11 o'clock a bugle was blown near their quarters, and then an assault was made upon them with rifles. The men poured out of their quarters and repelled the attack. By this time the fires, which had been set simultaneously with the attack, had enveloped many blocks of the nipa huts in flames, and was spreading with great rapidity. As there was nothing in this district except residences of the Filipinos, and no foreign property or Government property to be protected, it was determined to let it burn, and the provost guard was withdrawn to a more important section of the city. I never yet have discovered what the Filipinos expected to accomplish by burning down the native portion of the city, but the workings of the insurrecto mind are always past finding out. Not satisfied with what they had accomplished, they then set fires near a large market in the San Nicholas district, and as this threatened the business portion of the town, foreign stores and United States depots for supplies, a strenuous effort was made to extinguish it. It was then the fun began.

IN THE VICTORIA TRENCHES.

My own battalion had been called out at the first alarm, and was holding the "Victoria trenches" gallantly, smoking cigarets and joking about the Filipino celebration of Washington's Birthday. Away to the north the sky was aflame with the glare of the fire, while the air was filled with the sounds of conflict, or what appeared to the inexperienced ear to be such. One hearing it for the first time might well mistake it for the rear of musketry. The nipa houses are constructed of bamboo poles. As the air in the bamboo between the joints becomes heated it expands until it bursts the joint with an explosion closely resembling the report of a musket. In a single hut there are several hundred of these joints of bamboo, each one of which explodes in this way, sounding like the discharge of a gun. When a hundred or more huts are burning at the same time the constant popping of the bamboo is like the steady rattle of small-arms in a battle.

An amusing mistake of this kind was made early in the insurrection. The insurgents set fire to the huts near the barracks of the Washington regiment in the Paco district with the purpose of burning them out, which purpose was frustrated by the activity of the Washington men. While the conflagration was at its hight the steady roar of this bamboo battle came to the ears of a new Regular regiment about a mile distant, and the commander, being new in the islands, hastily dispatched a battalion to the aid of the volunteers, whom he supposed were having a bloody fight against great odds. When the relief column appeared on the ground it discovered the Washingtons in the act of setting fire to the few houses that had escaped the conflagration near their barracks, determined that there should be none left to serve as a basis of another effort to burn them out in the middle of the night. There were frequent reports of the hiding of ammunition by natives in the stacks of rice straw that stood in the fields, and it was customary for the soldiers to set fire to these in order to destroy this secreted ammunition. Such fires often produced many explosions, which went to confirm the opinion that ammunition was concealed there; but we who were wiser from experience knew that these explosions were but the popping of bamboo poles used to bind the stacks together. This was the kind of battle we listened to in the "Victoria trenches" until after midnight, when I received orders to take my company with another one and proceed to the scene of conflagration and report to the officer in command.

OREGONS BATTLING WITH THE FLAMES.

As we approached the fire a strange sight was witnessed. Thousands of refugees were streaming out of the burning districts, carrying everything they possibly could in the way of personal property. Some had squealing pigs in baskets, others had bundles of clothing on their heads, and still others were carrying lame and sick relatives and aged persons in baskets suspended from poles. Across the Blanco Bridge, the thoroughfare connecting the Tondo and St. Nicholas districts with the Binondo district, this stream of humanity poured, kept moving and prevented from congesting on the edge of the burning district by the street patrol, which had been greatly strengthened as soon as the seriousness of the fire and its probable connection with an attempted outbreak became apparent. And over all hung the spirit of submission to fate that is so strong in the Orient. Excited chattering there was in plenty, but no emotion. In all that hurrying throng I did not see a single woman or child in tears. It was fate, and they accepted it. Mingled with the motley crowd of Filipinos were thousands of Chinamen, for the burning district was occupied by a mixed Chinese and Tagal population; but the Chinese were showing greater anxiety and eagerness to save their property. This may have been because they had more of it to be saved. As we got near the fire this was more apparent, for then Chinamen only could be seen doing their utmost to get still more of their belongings out of danger. They would remain until their houses actually caught fire before leaving, while the Filipinos fled as soon as danger became apparent.

Reporting with my company to the officer in charge of the district, I was told to take half of it and go around on the west side of the fire and see if I could stop it from working over toward the bay. My only instructions were to do what I could, but I was given not a single appliance with which to work. My first idea was to get some buckets, and I began searching the abandoned houses near the edge of the fire for such implements, but could find none. Water is kept in earthen jars in the Orient, and such a thing as a wooden pail is unknown. For this reason my rough-and-ready Spanish had no name for such an object, and I could not even inquire for it.

Finally I discovered a small galvanized iron pail in a hut and was happy. Seizing it, I showed it to the first Chinaman I came to and asked what it was called, but all I could get from him was "No sabe." And this was all the satisfaction I received from any of them. Finally I descried a belated Filipino, and seizing him by the collar I thrust the pail under his nose and demanded to know what it was called. This happened to be a Tagal who did not speak Spanish, and I had to try it again by waylaying another fugitive. Then with the name in my possession I invaded the houses still occupied by Chinese on the border of the burning district and shouted it wildly, but received only the aggravating "No sabe" from them all. The final result of the raid was three tin buckets, and with these we began our battle with the flames, aided a little later by a dozen axes, which had been secured from the Quartermaster's Department after much delay, most of which never got back to it, and were no doubt "lost in action" on the returns.

The Spanish style of architecture does much to aid a fire department. The houses are two stories only, the lower of stone or cement and the upper of hard tropical woods, almost as slow to catch fire as a brick wall. Having perfectly smooth sides and very little "gingerbread work" about them, these houses offer little for darting tongues of flame from adjacent burning buildings to seize upon. I have seen blazing jars of oil alongside such a house as this, with the hot flames reaching clear up to the roof for 10 minutes before any portion of the house began to burn. With any sort of a fire apparatus there is no reason why the fire could not have been extinguished in a few minutes as soon as it left the nipa-hut district and worked its way into this section of cement and wooden houses, notwithstanding the narrowness of the streets. My men would fill these three buckets with water and rush into the street opposite the side which was burning and dash out the flames that were starting on the opposite side. Even with this little equipment much might have been accomplished could they have thrown the water as high as the cornice, for it was there always where the flames gained their first foothold. The axes were used to break down heavily-barred doors in order to gain entrance to houses for the purpose of throwing water from the windows of the second story.

(To be continued.)

METROPOLIS OF THE YUKON.

Wonderful Advancement of Dawson City During Past Four Years.

When Foghorn George, the squaw man, with his Siwash brother-in-law, washed the first Klondike gold in the Summer of 1896 he little realized the avalanche of civilization that his discovery would precipitate in the frozen North.

Rudolph Kersting, who went to Dawson last Summer by steamer and palace car, laughed when asked if he noticed any dead men on the trail.

"There isn't even a horse skeleton to be seen in White Pass," he said, "and this where in '97 3,000 horses perished in three months!

"In '97 I was seven months without hearing from my family. Now the Dawson newspapers complain that their mail service is not on a par with that of the larger towns in the States and Canada, and the rural free delivery system has its counterpart on the Yukon.

"Even Nome has never been so completely isolated as Dawson was in '97, nor is it likely that a city of 5,000 souls will ever again be cut off for an entire Winter from news of the outside world, or pay hundreds of dollars to hear the account of Dewey's victory read from a paper printed a month before.

"Civilization in 4,000 years hardly made greater progress than Dawson accomplished in the four years from 1898 to the present time.

"Even the dance houses and gambling establishments have felt the effects of the new order and their old-time supremacy is only a memory. The cold and Winter darkness are still in evidence, but coal and its products, steam and electricity, have been called in to combat them, and modern methods have robbed these two specters of their terrors.

"The gold dust currency is fast giving place to legal tender, and just now its exit is accelerated by the discovery of wholesale adulteration with imitation nuggets manufactured in San Francisco. Cents are so rare, however, that Indians still accept the bright ones for five-dollar gold pieces. Change of less than 25 cents or two bits valuation is not common.

"Not counting the quota from outlying mining camps, there are more than 100 school children in Dawson from kindergarten to the highest grades.

"The Canadian Government has just completed a handsome new schoolhouse for their accommodation. Beside the school, a new Court House has recently been completed, as well as an Administration building and a residence for the Governor, all of which are creditable architectural additions to the metropolis of the Yukon.

"Dawson has had the distinction of being the largest log city in the world, but the log cabin is giving way to the ordinary frame dwelling, which is cheaper and more in keeping with the modern town.

"Many fine, large, two and three-story frame business houses have been erected, and corrugated iron warehouses have been put up this season with capacity for perhaps 15,000 or 20,000 tons storage, in addition to what there was in the city last Winter. Several thousand tons of warm-storage quarters have been added. One fine two-story brick building has been erected at a cost of $30,000. This, it may be mentioned, is the second brick building in Dawson. Nor are these the only improvements.

"The Presbyterians are erecting a fine modern church after the style of the English country church, with seating capacity for several hundred. Three of the churches of the city will have pipe organs this Fall."

Many of the fresh vegetables for the Dawson market are raised in the immediate neighborhood, and so are barley, wheat, oats, buckwheat and rye. The latter crops are grown for the hay and fed to horses unthrashed.

That there are difficulties to be surmounted by the farmers and truckmen is not to be denied, as the prices paid for the commodities will indicate. The hay from a single acre of oats or rye has not infrequently sold for $1,000, and potatoes by the end of the Winter reach 25 cents a pound, while turnips, beets and other root crops cost about the same.

Dawson now has an Odd Fellows' Lodge under the direct dispensation of the Sovereign Grand Lodge at Baltimore. It has a district messenger service with electric call boxes, and the telegraph line to the outside world, which has long been in successful operation, will soon be in connection with a line to Nome.

Native coal of good quality lies available for Dawson in three separate mining localities above and below, and is brought from each in considerable quantities.

Perhaps not the least significant of the signs of the times is the influx of women of education, school teachers, nurses, clerks and the like, and the fact that they have hard work finding employment, not because there is no employment for business women, but because the field has already been occupied.

The retail trade of Dawson, which was originally controlled by a few large corporations, is now divided among several hundred business concerns of moderate capital.

Dredging and damming are going on along the upper Yukon, chiefly during the last Summer in the neighborhood of Lake La Barge, and the bowlders of the Thirty Mile, 200 in number, have been removed. Hell Gate will be tackled next and the last of the terrors of navigation removed.

Dawson will soon have a network of railroads radiating out to neighboring camps.